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**HOUSE OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**OPENING STATEMENT BY RANKING MEMBER CHRISTOPHER SHAYS**  
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Today, the Subcommittee examines education reform in Pakistan. On the surface, this may seem far removed from the concerns of this Subcommittee, but, it is not. The Government of Pakistan's success overriding the persuasion of Islamic extremism in its educational system directly affects national and international security. But, as we go into this inquiry we must keep in mind the inherent limitations of US policy and US aid affecting dramatic cultural change.

Education reform in Pakistan takes on two meanings: (1) strengthening of the educational institutions; and (2) having influence over Islamic schools better known as *madrassas*. Both Presidents Bush and Musharraf have stated success in eradicating terror cannot be accomplished without dramatic improvement in Pakistan's education system.

The problems affecting public education in Pakistan range from the lack of qualified teachers to the limited number of school buildings. In some of the less developed regions, teachers serve as child sitters—not educators. At the other end of the spectrum, in the earthquake-ravaged and economically-depressed areas, there are no physical structures to accommodate school-aged children.

An entire generation in Pakistan is suffering from inadequate public educational opportunities. This void and, in some instances, financial hardship, has led some families to send their children to one of the 12,000 tuition-free *madrassas* in Pakistan. The vast majority of these *madrassas* teach the fundamental tenets of Islam, but, in many cases, they lack a curriculum for science, math and English.

A minority of these *madrassas* are indoctrinating students with anti-Western, pro-Islamic fundamentalist messages. It is these *madrassas* and the Islamic extremists they beget which pose a serious threat to regional and international security.

This is the life cycle of a terrorist: the first step is Islamic indoctrination. The next step is graduation to terror training camps—many of which have connections to Al Qaeda or Taliban. Next, they move across the porous Pakistani-Afghan border into Afghanistan to wage Jihad against Coalition Forces.

But that is not the only front for these Jihadists. The products of terrorist training camps have affected their terror in Western venues as well. It is known the terrorists responsible for the London Underground bombing and the disrupted United Kingdom fertilizer bomb plot had links to or were trained in madrassas and terror training camps in Pakistan.

Which cities and which innocent civilians will be the next victim of this terrorism?

Pakistan has taken meaningful steps towards education reform. After 9/11, Presidents Bush and Musharraf said education reform in Pakistan is a key to stemming the rise of Islamic extremism and the rise of global terrorism.

President Musharraf is the first Pakistani leader in recent decades to take an unpopular stand against schools and camps used to indoctrinate Pakistani youth with the principles of Islamic fundamentalism.

In 2002, President Musharraf laid out a three-pronged approach: (1) requiring registration and inspection of these religious facilities; (2) excluding foreigners from the religious schools; and (3) requiring madrassas accept national education board testing standards. But, these reforms have been difficult to implement not only because of a lack of governance capacity and oversight but also because of institutional resistance by the religious sector.

Critics say President Musharraf has done nothing to stop the proliferation of madrassas and effect meaningful reform. Other critics believe President Musharraf has provided lip service to the meaningful reforms he promised and has bowed to political pressures from Muslim political parties. And, still others say Musharraf will continue to do the bare minimum to ensure continued unrestricted financial support from the United States.

The bottom line is: education reform in Pakistan is happening; neither President Musharraf's success in strengthening the education sector nor the successes of US Agency for International Development-led projects can or should be overlooked. However, substantial advancement still lies ahead, and our role as legislators is to assess this reform honestly, letting the chips fall where they may, and to determine where the US must apply pressure to ensure successful and complete reform.

We should not forget we need Pakistan's help in fighting terrorism. President Musharraf has accepted that mission. And, while there are questions about President Musharraf's ability to confront madrassas, we must remain Pakistan's partner as it struggles to reform the one sector which assures the advancement and survival of their society: education.

Mr. Chairman, I congratulate you on holding today's hearing. It is an opportunity for us to learn definitively from our esteemed witnesses the status of Pakistan's education system, what accomplishments have been achieved, and the prognosis and path to eliminate the teachings of Islamic intolerance and fundamentalism.

I thank our witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony. I also want to thank the US Embassy in Islamabad, especially Chargé d'Affaires Peter Bodee, for making Ms. Ahmed's video testimony today possible.